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No. 53.

## HAVE YOU A FRIEND?

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HAVE you a friend? Do you wish to have one? Would you have one that loves at all times? Is there such a one to be found? A very wise man says, "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." That friend you may find in Jesus Christ. There is no other name under heaven given among men which so fully, so truly, exemplifies this description. All merely human friends are, in some circumstances, broken reeds; they are either unable to help, or they refuse it when we most need it. "Men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie." There is no sure dependence to be placed on any. Not so our Divine friend; he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." He is "the chiefest among ten thousand." Can you say, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend?"

He is a tender-hearted friend, for he sympathizes with his disciples in all their trials of whatever kind. He forgives their sins under whatever aggravations; and not once, twice, thrice, or seven times, but until seventy times seven. In the hour of affliction there can not be a more tender friend. "The Lord will strengthen them on the bed of languishing; he will make all their bed in their sickness." "In all their afflictions he is afflicted."

He is a most sincere friend. Sincere friends unbosom themselves to each other, and communicate those secrets which they would not impart on any account to strangers. Christ does so. He says, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." Sincere friends, though absent, are mindful of each other; they often communicate, and look forward to the time of meeting again. Christ, though absent, is always thinking of his people—always interceding for them—always anticipating the time when they will be brought into his blissful presence.

## 2 HAVE YOU A FRIEND?

...He is a most powerful friend. The ability of our friends to serve us; often falls short of their inclination. However anxious to promote our welfare, they are sometimes unable. But the ability of Christ is infinite as his love. "All power is given unto him; in heaven and in earth." With what confidence and peace may the true servants of Christ repose on the ability of such a friend! When you are ready to yield to strong temptations; when you grow weak in well-doing; when you are broken-hearted with sore and great troubles, and you draw nigh to death; even then Christ can refresh your soul, and fill you with joy and peace in believing. That promise made to the apostle Paul is equally applicable to every sincere Christian: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." In the confidence of such a promise you might say, Whom or what should I then fear? "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident."

Jesus Christ is mighty to save. Hear his own declaration. "I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." But Christ's love exceeds this; he loved us when we were enemies; he died for us to prove his love, and render it fruitful of benefits to our souls. For us, the fallen children of an apostate parent; for us, haters of God's law; O, wondrous grace! for us, despisers of his glorious gospel; for such, even for such as you, reader, perhaps a sinful rebel all your life long, God gave his Son, and Christ gave himself. The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost; he came to reconcile us to God; to give us peace and joy in life, hope and triumph in death, and, after death, glory, honor, and immortality. He came not merely to restore, but to exalt us to a higher state and better honors than our fathers ever enjoyed. How, then, should every heart, and yours in particular, glow with admiration, gratitude, and faith! Shall we not love him who first loved us? The "unspeakable gift" of God has been bestowed upon a lost world. The richest treasure that heaven itself could impart has been freely given; the most precious blood has been shed upon Calvary's cross. The groans of Jesus, the tears he shed, the

horrors that came upon him, the agony that he endured, the strong cries he uttered, the painful victory he obtained, all testify to the sincerity, the strength, the tenderness of his love to our souls. Was not this love beyond a brother's—beyond that of the best friend you ever knew or ever had ?

He is a perpetual friend ; he will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. Sometimes those who have been our friends for many years fail us. We offend them, or they are alienated, and they become, if not enemies, yet indifferent to our welfare. But where Christ once fixes his love he never changes. He is present with his people as their unfailing, inalienable friend. His presence is to them a source of most pure and substantial joy. Far beyond all the joys of earth, and all the delights of human friendship, is that of feeling that we are friends of Jesus Christ, and that he is ours. This is not more than he promises, for he says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." The import of which manifestly is, My efficient friendship shall never fail thee. Christ attends to the wants of his servants, and especially when they most need his assistance. In six troubles he will be present with his people, and in seven he will not forsake them. No real, permanent evil shall befall them ; he will be nearest to them when passing through the dark valley and shadow of death. We must all die, the rich and the poor, the old and the young. No man knoweth either the hour or the circumstances of his departure. Yet all would wish to die happily, joyfully, hopefully. Death is described in Scripture as the *last* enemy ; but it is so only to the friends of Christ. Then to have this friend present with us is essential to our victory over that last enemy. How should you, reader, like to grapple with him alone in all his terrors ? The time can not be very far off ; in the space of a few days, or, at the utmost, a few years, your earthly tabernacle must be taken down ; death will pull it down shortly, or at once, and cause it to molder into dust. But though death should be the king of terrors to you, not so will he be to those whom Christ calls his friends. This is a season in which he will not leave them. Though it is one in which friends and relations must resign them—when fellow-pilgrims to the same heavenly home must say farewell, yet the Lord Jesus, the faithful friend, will not leave them. They will only pass from time into eternity. They will wake in glory

with his likeness. If you are one of Christ's true and attached friends, your body may be laid in the grave, but will he leave it there? No; "he will come again and receive you unto himself; that where he is, there you may be also." He will receive you with a hearty welcome to his own glory, saying, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Reader, is Christ such a friend? Then cling to him; or if you never yet have sought his friendship, now seek it with your whole heart. Take up the language of David, and say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." When Satan and the world, or sinful inclinations, tempt you to renounce the friendship of Christ, or even to peril it, say, It is too precious to be endangered for the pleasures of sin, which are only for a season. Turn your heart to him, and say, "Lord, to whom shall I go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Thou art the unfailing source of my comfort, life, and joy; therefore, in cleaving to thee I shall be both happy and secure; but in departing from thee, in renouncing thy friendship, I shall be miserable—"a wretch undone."

Are you, then, a friend of Christ? for by this you shall know whether he is your friend. Can you say anything of a man more wretched and comfortless than this: He has not a friend in the world? What a deplorable situation must that be! not a friend to help him in his difficulties; not a friend to supply his wants; not a friend to visit or comfort him in his afflictions. You pity such a man. Look upon a more fearful reality. It is thyself, if thou art Christless. What are other possessions if he is not your best friend? Yea, far heavier misery hangs upon thy soul if Christ is not thy friend in thy dying hour. Seek him, then, with thy whole heart, while he may be found. He will become thy brother, thy friend, thy Savior, and his heaven thy eternal home.

"Jesus, the sinner's Friend, to thee,  
Lost and undone, for aid I flee;  
Weary of earth, myself, and sin,  
Open thine arms and take me in.  
I give up every plea beside,  
Lord, I am lost—but thou hast died."